DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 5/23/2011 has been entered.

Claims 1, 14, 22, 28, 33, 42, 48, and 55 have been amended and claim 11 has been canceled. Claims 1-10, 14-17, 21-29, and 31-59 are pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

2. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

> The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 42-59 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 42, 48, and 55 recite "summing one or more of the following". It is unclear how one item would be summed. For example, item (1) is an individual feedback rating. How would one rating be summed? Clarification is required.

Claims 43-47, 49-54, and 56-59 depend from claims 42, 48, and 55, respectively, and inherit the same deficiencies.

Further, claims 47 and 53 recite that the one or more characteristic values include alphabetic values, alpha-numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values. However, claims 42 and 48 from which they depend recites that these values are summed. It is unclear how one would sum alphabetic values, alpha-numeric values, symbolic values, and graphic values. Clarification is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

> A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –
>
> (e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 42-43, 47-49, 50, 53, 55, and 56 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Ginn (US 6,052,723).

As per claim 42, Ginn teaches a method, comprising:

Associating, by a first processor, one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each user being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community (See column 2, lines 55-60, column 10, lines

26-36, which discloses that the system tracks point totals/ratings of the user by the community reflecting their reputation. See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein points are associated with a user in an online community. These points are from the actions of the user (eg them completing an action they said they would) as well as the opinions of others (eg other users asking the system to reward an author of a liked message a point). See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, for the computer system);

Determining, by a second processor, a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by summing *one* or more of (1) an individual feedback rating values associated with the particular user (See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein point totals are used to determine the community rating of the user, and points are added together to arrive at the point totals. These points are from the actions of the user as well as the opinions of others). Examiner notes that only one of the items (1) through (4) is required to be summed and thus referrals are not required in this claim.

Storing the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user in a storage device (See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses storage and storing various items in the storage, including point totals/ratings reflecting the community reputation of the users).

As per claim 43, Ginn teaches associating the community rating to the particular user (See column 2, lines 55-60, column 10, lines 26-36, column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein the rating is tracked and associated with the user).

As per claim 47, Ginn teaches wherein one or more of the characteristic values and the community rating comprises numeric values (See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20).

As per claim 49, Ginn discloses a second storage medium and a second computer coupled with the second storage medium and the first computer via a network interface, the second computer to receive feedback concerning the particular user from other users of the plurality of users, generate a feedback value corresponding to the particular user based on the feedback and transmit the feedback value to the first computer (See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, column 10, lines 26-36. See also See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20).

As per claim 50, Ginn teaches wherein a first computer comprises a server computer and the second computer comprises a client computer (See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, column 10, lines 26-36).

Claims 48, 53, 55, 56 recite equivalent limitations to claims 42, 47, 42, 43 respectively, and are rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 44, 54, 57 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ginn (US 6,052,723) in view of Zacharia et al. (*Collaborative Reputation Mechanisms in Electronic Marketplaces).*

As per claim 44, Ginn does not expressly disclose that the online community specifically trades merchandise over a network, wherein the trading of merchandise comprises at least one of buying or selling of goods or services.

Zacharia et al. discloses that a reputation or trust based online community would specifically trade merchandise over a network, wherein the trading of merchandise comprises at least one of buying or selling of goods or services (see abstract, page 2, column 2, wherein OnSale Exchange and Ebay have online communities for scoring the buying and selling of goods over a network).

Ginn and Zacharia et al. both disclose systems that track the reputation of users in an online community. Both utilize point systems to track such reputations. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include buying and selling communities in the reputation scoring and tracking system of Ginn in order to increase user confidence in engaging in an online negotiation with another user by more accurately tracking a person's reputation and integrity. See abstract of Zacharia et al.

Claims 54 and 57 recite equivalent limitations to claims 44 and are rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

5. Claims 45, 51, and 58 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ginn (US 6,052,723) in view of Epinions.com. This is a rejection over the services made available through the website Epinions.com. The following publications are used to support the rejection set forth below:

Various archived web pages of Epinions.com acquired from webarchive.org (WayBackMachine) ranging from Nov. 27, 1999 to Jan. 22, 2000 on pages 1-18 and 21-28.

Nick Patience in "Epinions Launches Online Shopping Guide Built on Trust" from Sept. 1, 1999 on pages 19-20.

As per claims 45, Ginn does not expressly disclose and discloses maintaining a relationship tree between the particular user, each user referred to the online trading community by the particular user, and each user referred to the online trading community by each referred user of the particular user.

Epinions.com teaches maintaining a relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship tree includes sponsorships between the particular user and any users of the plurality of users that were referred by the particular user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. See page 6 which specifically states that you can sponsor friends and **refer** them to take part in the community). Both Epinions.com and Ginn disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain reputation, credibility, and trust based on their actions and other members' opinions. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to represent the users that are associated with the particular user in the point system of Ginn using a relationship tree, such

as that of Epinions, in order to more efficiently track the reputations of users of Ginn by showing who is related to and has voted on that particular user.

Claims 51 and 58 recite equivalent limitations to claims 45 and are rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

6. **Claims 1-8, 14-17, 21-29, and 31-41 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epinions.com in view of Ginn (US 6,052,723).** This is a rejection over the services made available through the website Epinions.com. The following publications are used to support the rejection set forth below:

Various archived web pages of Epinions.com acquired from webarchive.org (WayBackMachine) ranging from Nov. 27, 1999 to Jan. 22, 2000 on pages 1-18 and 21-28.

Nick Patience in "Epinions Launches Online Shopping Guide Built on Trust" from Sept. 1, 1999 on pages 19-20.

As per claim 1, Epinions.com teaches a method comprising:

associating one or more characteristic values with each user of a plurality of users of an online trading community, the one or more characteristic values representing an individual feedback rating associated with each user, the individual feedback rating associated with each user being established based on votes from other users of the plurality of users of the online trading community (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful. The web tool trades

services in a community. See specifically page 5, which states that you back/vote on users by selecting "click here if you trust this member's opinions"); and

deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by aggregating an individual feedback rating associated with the particular user and one or more feedback ratings associated with one or more users referred by the particular user to the online trading community (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived using the web of trust and reviews of the user's opinion by community members. The community ratings uniquely correspond to the user and use one or more rating values associated with the user. For example, a community rating is seen on the bottom of page 10, where the 11/22/99 review of Bonies7 is considered very useful by the community. See at least pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. Users are "referred" by a particular user to the community. See page 9, where a user connects and brings into the community/web of trust (ie refers) the one or more users. See page 6 which specifically states that you can sponsor friends and **refer** them to take part in the community);

Maintaining the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived and maintained. See also pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19).

However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by summing ratings associated with the particular user or storing the community rating of the user in a storage device.

Ginn discloses a system that tracks the user's reputation based on their actions and the opinions of others (See column 2, lines 55-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses that the

system tracks point totals/ratings of the user by the community reflecting their reputation). Ginn discloses deriving a community rating uniquely corresponding to a particular user by summing ratings associated with the particular user (See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein point totals are used to determine the community rating of the user, and points are added together to arrive at the point totals. These points are from the actions of the user (eg them completing an action they said they would) as well as the opinions of others (eg other users asking the system to reward an author of a liked message a point)). Ginn further discloses storing the community rating of the user in a storage device (See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses storage and storing various items in the storage, including point totals/ratings reflecting the community reputation of the users). Examiner notes that Ginn also teaches establishing an individual feedback rating based on votes from other users by allowing other users to express their opinions concerning the particular user and ask the system to reward points to the particular user.

Both Epinions.com and Ginn disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain reputation, credibility, and trust based on their actions and other members' opinions.

Epinions discloses that community members vote on the quality of a user of a system to result in a rating for the user (such as "very useful"). Epinions combines values concerning the opinions of the specific user (the quality and quantity of the particular user's opinions), the specific user's rating (backing) of other users' reviews, and the other users' reviews of the particular user to determine if the user is rated as an expert user. Ginn also discloses combining values associated with a user to derive a community score/reputation, specifically summing points based on the actions of the user and the opinions of that user by other users. It would be

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the points to the opinions and votes of Epinions, such as the points assigned to the writings and actions of users in Ginn, and then derive a summed score from these points, such as in Ginn, in order to efficiently and objectively track and measure a user's reputation.

Further, both the systems of Ginn and Epinions.com are computer based systems. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the ability to store the ratings of Epinions et al. using the storage device of Ginn in order to more efficiently maintain the ratings information of the system. Epinions.com is a website that maintains information concerning the users of the website. It is known in the art that web pages and web sites interact with and store information, content, and instructions in storage devices. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine a storage device, such as that of Ginn, with the web page of Epinions.com, in order to produce the predictable result of storing the data, such as the web of trust information, of the Epinions.com site.

As per claim 2, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the online trading community comprises an electronic community to trade merchandise over a network, including goods or services (See at least pages 1, 6, and 9-11, wherein the electronic community is a community that trades the merchandise of services over the network). However, neither Epinions nor Ginn expressly disclose that the traded services and opinions are bought or sold.

Examiner takes official notice that the buying and selling of goods and services over a network was well known at the time of the invention and further was well known in reputation or trust management systems. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the

time of the invention to include that goods or service are bought or sold in the online communities of Ginn and Epinions in order to increase user confidence in engaging in an online negotiation with another user by more accurately tracking a person's reputation and integrity.

As per claim 3, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the network comprises the Internet (See pages 1 and 19, wherein epinions.com is an internet based tool).

As per claim 4, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the one or more characteristic values comprise a feedback value based on feedback concerning the particular user received from other users of the plurality of users in the electronic community (See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their reviews).

As per claim 5, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the other users of the plurality of users comprise users that have previously traded with the particular user (See at least pages 9-13 and page 19, sections 1-3, wherein the feedback is written by customers who have traded services with the user previously, wherein the user is rated as very useful, useful, etc. See page 9, which lists the plurality of users that "trust" the user).

As per claim 6, Epinions.com teaches a method further comprising maintaining a relationship tree between each user of the plurality of users, the relationship tree includes sponsorships between the particular user and any users of the plurality of users that were referred by the particular user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user).

As per claim 7, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein the sponsorship relationships of the plurality of users are represented as a relationship tree including one or more n-ary trees (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. So if Bonies7 is trusted by a hypothetical Joe and Joe is trusted by a hypothetical Sarah, that is an n-ary web or tree of trust).

As per claim 8, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein information concerning the sponsorship relationships between the plurality of users is stored in a data structure for each user of the plurality of users (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. Furthermore, see page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members).

Claims 14, 15, 16, and 17 recite equivalent limitations to claims 1, 2, 4, and 6, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

As per claim 21, Epinions.com teaches wherein the community rating for the particular user represents a reputation value corresponding to the particular user (See pages 9-11, wherein the user rating represents a reputation value of the user as useful, very useful, etc.).

As per claim 22, Epinions.com teaches a method comprising:

On a computer, associating a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value being obtained for the first user utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein the

web tool allows members to trade services and a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their reviews);

On a computer, associating a second characteristic value with a second user of a plurality of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user, the second characteristic value being obtained for the second user utilizing a second feedback value based on feedback received concerning the second user from other users of the plurality of users (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their reviews. The system maintains a relationship structure of users that back the opinion of each user. Furthermore, see page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members); and

On a computer, deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing an aggregation of the first feedback value and the second feedback value (See page 8, wherein a first community user is deemed an expert by the quality and quantity of his/her reviews as well as the rating he/she gives other members. See also pages 2-5, 9-13, and 19, wherein the web of trust shows who the user trusts (or backs) and who trusts (or backs) him/her. Therefore, the community rating is made up of the relationship of the user to other users in the community and his/her rating);

Using a computer, maintaining the community rating uniquely corresponding to the particular user (See at least pages 9 and 10, wherein a community rating is derived and maintained. See also pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19).

However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing a sum of the first feedback value and the second feedback value or utilizing processors or storing the community rating of the user in a storage device.

Ginn discloses a system that tracks the user's reputation based on their actions and the opinions of others (See column 2, lines 55-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses that the system tracks point totals/ratings of the user by the community reflecting their reputation). Ginn discloses deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing a sum of the first feedback value and the second feedback value (See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein point totals are used to determine the community rating of the user, and points are added together to arrive at the point totals. These points are from the actions of the user (eg them completing an action they said they would) as well as the opinions of others (eg other users asking the system to reward an author of a liked message a point)). Ginn further discloses utilizing processors and storing the community rating of the user in a storage device (See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses storage and storing various items in the storage, including point totals/ratings reflecting the community reputation of the users). Examiner notes that Ginn also teaches establishing an individual feedback rating based on votes from other users by allowing other users to express their opinions concerning the particular user and ask the system to reward points to the particular user.

Both Epinions.com and Ginn disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain reputation, credibility, and trust based on their actions and other members' opinions.

Epinions discloses that community members vote on the quality of a user of a system to result in a rating for the user (such as "very useful"). Epinions combines values concerning the opinions of the specific user (the quality and quantity of the particular user's opinions), the specific user's rating (backing) of other users' reviews, and the other users' reviews of the particular user to determine if the user is rated as an expert user. Ginn also discloses combining values associated with a user to derive a community score/reputation, specifically summing points based on the actions of the user and the opinions of that user by other users. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the points to the opinions and votes of Epinions, such as the points assigned to the writings and actions of users in Ginn, and then derive a summed score from these points, such as in Ginn, in order to efficiently and objectively track and measure a user's reputation.

Further, both the systems of Ginn and Epinions.com are computer based systems. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include the ability to store the ratings of Epinions et al. using the storage device of Ginn in order to more efficiently maintain the ratings information of the system. Epinions.com is a website that maintains information concerning the users of the website. It is known in the art that web pages and web sites interact with and store information, content, and instructions in storage devices. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine a storage device, such as that of Ginn, with the web page of Epinions.com, in order to

produce the predictable result of storing the data, such as the web of trust information, of the Epinions.com site.

As per claim 23, Epinions.com teaches a method further comprising:

associating a third characteristic value with a third user of the plurality of users, wherein the third user is referred to the online trading community by the second user, the third characteristic value is obtained for the third user by utilizing a third feedback value based on feedback received concerning the third user from other users of the plurality of users (See page 8, wherein a community user is deemed an expert by the quality and quantity of his/her reviews as well as the rating he/she gives other members. See pages 2-5, 9-13, 19, and 24, wherein a third value is associated with a third user (the third user "backed" by the second), the third value based on feedback about the user); and

deriving a second community rating for the second user by utilizing an aggregation of the second characteristic value and the third characteristic value (See at least pages 9, 10, and 24, wherein a community rating is derived using the web of trust and reviews of the user's opinion by community members. The community ratings uniquely correspond to the user and use one or more rating values associated with the user. For example, a community rating is seen on the bottom of page 10, where the 11/22/99 review of Bonies7 is considered very useful by the community. The web of trust shows whom the user trusts (or backs) and who trusts (or backs) him/her. Therefore, the community rating is made up of the relationship of the user to other users in the community and his/her rating).

As per claim 24, Epinions.com teaches maintaining a relationship tree between the first user and the second user of the plurality of users, wherein the relationship tree comprises a

sponsorship relationship having the second user as a lineal descendent of the first user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. See also page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members).

As per claim 25, Epinions.com discloses a method further comprising maintaining a relationship tree between the second user and the third user of the plurality of users, wherein the relationship tree comprises a sponsorship relationship having the third user as a lineal descendant of the second user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. See also page 6, which discusses sponsorship of members).

As per claim 26, Epinions.com discloses wherein the relationship tree comprises a nexus between the first user, the second user, and other users referred to by at least one of the first user and the second user (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of connected and linked users that back the opinion of the specific user. See also page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members).

As per claim 27, Epinions.com discloses a method wherein the first community rating comprises a first reputation value corresponding to the first user, and the second community rating comprises a second reputation value corresponding to the second user (See at least pages 9-11, wherein the rating for the user represents a reputation value of the user as useful, very useful, etc. This is done for each member/user in the community).

As per claim 28, Epinions.com teaches a machine-readable medium having stored thereon data representing sets of instructions which, when executed by a machine, cause the machine to:

associating a first characteristic value with a first user of a plurality of users within an online trading community, the first characteristic value is obtained for the first user by utilizing a first feedback value based on feedback received concerning the first user from other users of the plurality of users (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their reviews);

associating a second characteristic value with a second user of a plurality of users, wherein the second user is referred to the online trading community by the first user and the second characteristic value is obtained for the second user by utilizing a second feedback value based on feedback received concerning the second user from other users of the plurality of users (See pages 2-5, 9-11, and 19, paragraph 3, wherein a characteristic value is maintained for each user, a user being rated as very useful or useful, etc.. See pages 9-13 and 19, paragraphs 1-3, wherein each customer can rate and share recommendations and users rate the reviewers and their reviews. The system maintains a relationship structure of users that back the opinion of each user. Furthermore, see page 6 which discusses sponsorship of members); and

deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing an aggregation of the first feedback value and the second feedback value (See page 8, wherein a first community user is deemed an expert by the quality and quantity of his/her reviews as well as the rating he/she gives

other members. See also pages 2-5, 9-13, and 19, wherein the web of trust shows who the user trusts (or backs) and who trusts (or backs) him/her. Therefore, the community rating is made up of the relationship of the user to other users in the community and his/her rating).

However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing a sum of the first feedback value and the second feedback value.

Ginn discloses a system that tracks the user's reputation based on their actions and the opinions of others (See column 2, lines 55-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses that the system tracks point totals/ratings of the user by the community reflecting their reputation). Ginn discloses deriving a first community rating for the first user by utilizing a sum of the first feedback value and the second feedback value (See column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein point totals are used to determine the community rating of the user, and points are added together to arrive at the point totals. These points are from the actions of the user (eg them completing an action they said they would) as well as the opinions of others (eg other users asking the system to reward an author of a liked message a point)). Ginn further discloses utilizing processors and storing the community rating of the user in a storage device (See figure 1, element 38, and column 4, lines 45-60, column 10, lines 26-36, which discloses storage and storing various items in the storage, including point totals/ratings reflecting the community reputation of the users). Examiner notes that Ginn also teaches establishing an individual feedback rating based on votes from other users by allowing other users to express their opinions concerning the particular user and ask the system to reward points to the particular user.

Both Epinions.com and Ginn disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain reputation, credibility, and trust based on their actions and other members' opinions.

Epinions discloses that community members vote on the quality of a user of a system to result in a rating for the user (such as "very useful"). Epinions combines values concerning the opinions of the specific user (the quality and quantity of the particular user's opinions), the specific user's rating (backing) of other users' reviews, and the other users' reviews of the particular user to determine if the user is rated as an expert user. Ginn also discloses combining values associated with a user to derive a community score/reputation, specifically summing points based on the actions of the user and the opinions of that user by other users. It would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the points to the opinions and votes of Epinions, such as the points assigned to the writings and actions of users in Ginn, and then derive a summed score from these points, such as in Ginn, in order to efficiently and objectively track and measure a user's reputation.

Claims 29, 31-32, 33, 34, 40, and 41 recite equivalent limitations to claims 24, 26-27, 1, 4, 23, and 25, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

As per claim 35, Epinions.com discloses computers that interact over a network such as the Internet (See pages 1 and 19, wherein epinions.com is an internet based tool. However, Epinions.com does not expressly disclose that a first computer comprises a server computer and the second computer that comprises a client computer.

Ginn discloses that a first computer comprises a server computer and the second computer that comprises a client computer (See figure 15).

Both Epinions.com and Ginn disclose electronic community sites where users/members gain credibility and trust based on other members in the system. Epinions.com discloses a network-based tool through which a user can receive and post opinion information, such as ratings. Ginn discloses a network based online community ratings system. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to include a client and server in Epinions et al. in order to allow for efficient interaction between the user and the website. It is known in the art that web pages and web sites are served by servers and viewed by clients. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine the client/server model of Ginn in order to produce the predictable result of serving the website.

Claims 36, 37, 38, and 39 recite equivalent limitations to claims 17, 4, 2, and 3, respectively, and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale as applied above.

7. **Claims 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epinions.com in view of Ginn (US 6,052,723) and in further view of Aho et al. (*Data Structures and Algorithms*).**

As per claim 9, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein information concerning the relationships between the plurality of users is stored in a data structure for each user of the plurality of users (See at least page 9, wherein, for example, Bonies7 web of trust shows her relationship with other users. The system maintains this relationship structure of users that back the opinion of the specific user. Furthermore, see page 6 that discusses sponsorship of members). However, neither Epinions.com nor Ginn disclose that the data structure for the

particular user contains a pointer to the at least one user of the plurality of users that was referred by the particular user.

Aho et al. teaches a data structure that contains a pointer to the at least one member of a plurality of members (See at least page 87 and figure 3.12, in which the data structure contains a pointer which shows the relationship).

Epinions et al. and Ginn are combinable for the reasons set forth above. Further, both Epinions.com and Aho et al. disclose structured relationships of members. It is old and well known in the art to use pointers to show the relationship between entities. For example, in Aho et al.'s book "Data Structures and Algorithms" the use of pointers is shown in figure 3.12 in the data structure to show the relationship between the users (see page 87). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to use pointers in the data structures in order to allow one to quickly and accurately determine a user's sponsorship and others in their web of trust.

As per claim 10, Epinions.com teaches a method wherein one or more community ratings for the particular user is derived (See at least pages 9 and 10). However, neither Epinions.com nor Ginn disclose that the one or more community ratings is derived utilizing a recursive routine.

Aho et al. discloses using recursive routines in data structures (See page 76).

Epinions et al. and Ginn are combinable for the reasons set forth above. Recursive routines are old and well known as efficient ways to manipulate the values of structured data. The reviews of Epinions.com are associated in a web of trust, which is a data structure linking members and members rating in a structured manner to derive overall reviews for a user. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the

invention to use a recursive routine when deriving one or more community rating for a user in order to more efficiently program and manipulate the information stored about the user ratings in the web of trust.

8. **Claims 46, 52, and 59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Epinions.com in view of Ginn (US 6,052,723) and in further view of Aho et al. (*Data Structures and Algorithms*).**

As per claim 46, Ginn does not expressly disclose that the community rating for the particular user is determined by using a recursive routine. Aho et al. discloses using recursive routines in data structures (See page 76).

Ginn discloses determining community ratings for users over time based on ongoing feedback (See column 10, lines 26-36). Recursive routines are old and well known as efficient ways to manipulate the values of structured data. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to use a recursive routine when deriving one or more community rating for a user in order to more efficiently program and manipulate the information stored about the user ratings.

Claims 52 and 59 recite equivalent limitations to claim 46 and are therefore rejected using the same art and rationale applied above.

Response to Arguments

9. Applicant's arguments have been fully considered. Applicant argues that (1) Epinions does not teach or suggest that the rating of the user is established based on votes from other users of the community and (2) a community rating is derived by summing.

In response to argument (1), examiner respectfully disagrees. A vote, in the broadest reasonable interpretation, is an expression of an opinion or choice. In Epinions, specifically page 5, other users express whether or not they trust a users opinion by backing or voting on that opinion ("click here if you trust this member's opinions". Ginn also discloses votes from other users of the plurality of users in column 4, lines 27-31, column 10, lines 26-36, column 11, line 55-column 12, line 20, wherein points are given to users based on the opinions of others (eg other users asking the system to reward an author of a liked message a point).

Examiner notes that in claim 1, the claimed action is associating one or more characteristic values with each user, the characteristic value representing an individual feedback rating. The claim then contains descriptive language stating that" the feedback rating being established based on votes…". Therefore, the action of establishing the rating based on votes is not positively claimed as an active step of the method and further does not appear to manipulatively alter the action of associating. The same logic applies to the other independent claims. In the computer readable medium the instructions for establishing the individual feedback rating are not positively stored on the medium and do not appear to alter the associating instructions.

In response to argument (2), Examiner points out that this limitation was added in the current amendment and has been addressed above using the prior art of Ginn (US 6,052,723).

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Foner (*Yenta: A Multi-Agent, Referral-Based Matchmaking System*) discloses an algorithm that uses referrals from one agent to another.

Zacharia et al. (*Collaborative Reputation Mechanisms in Electronic Marketplaces*) discloses an overview of systems for reputation management, including using connections between people in a scoring system including adding and averaging (page 2 and 5).

Spiegel et al. (US 6,466,918) teaches community scores and personal scores and determining collective scores.

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to Beth V. Boswell at telephone number (571)272-6737.

/Beth V. Boswell/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3623